

EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION

TEL: 880-2-883-7150-4

FAX: 880-2-9881677, 9885688

E-MAIL: DhakaPA@state.gov

WEBSITE: <http://dhaka.usembassy.gov>



PRESS RELEASE

**U.S. GOVERNMENT RECOGNIZES ODHIKAR FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS ACHIEVEMENTS**

DHAKA, FEBRUARY 12 -- Ambassador Moriarty visited Odhikar, one of Bangladesh's leading human rights NGOs (non-governmental organizations), to congratulate the organization on its selection as a runner-up for the U.S. State Department's 2008 Freedom Defenders Award. The annual award recognizes outstanding achievement in advancing creative and/or effective strategies to promote democracy and human rights.

During the visit, Ambassador Moriarty reiterated the United States' commitment to supporting human rights in Bangladesh and around the world. The Ambassador acknowledged the important role non-governmental organizations play in calling attention to human rights issues and advocating for change. He recognized Odhikar's commitment over the past fourteen years to pressing successive governments to uphold and respect human rights. Ambassador Moriarty also expressed his appreciation to the more than 200 human rights defenders across Bangladesh who serve as the organization's eyes and ears.

The annual State Department Human Rights Report will be released in Washington on February 25th. Once the report is released in Washington, the U.S. Embassy in Dhaka will post the report on its website and provide a Bangla translation of the Report's Bangladesh section.

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Note: A Bangla translation of this press release is also available at the American Center. If you are interested in the translation, please call the American Center Press Section, Tel: 8837150-4, Fax: 9885688; e-mail: DhakaPA@state.gov; Website: <http://dhaka.usembassy.gov>